

From: Blumenfeld, Jared
Sent: Thursday, December 12, 2013 10:29 AM
To: Scott, Jeff; Mogharabi, Nahal
Subject: Fw: News Release: EPA Provides Updated Guidance to Schools on PCB-containing Lighting Fixtures

Jared Blumenfeld, EPA

From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Thursday, December 12, 2013 10:07:28 AM
To: Blumenfeld, Jared; Spalding, Curt; Hedman, Susan
Subject: News Release: EPA Provides Updated Guidance to Schools on PCB-containing Lighting Fixtures

**EPA Provides Updated Guidance to Schools on
PCB-containing Lighting Fixtures**

Contact: John Martin, (212) 637-3662, martin.johnj@epa.gov

(New York, N.Y. – Dec. 12, 2013) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is providing important guidance to school administrators and maintenance personnel on how to properly maintain and manage fluorescent lighting with ballasts that contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Many older ballasts contain PCBs that can leak when the ballasts fail, leading to elevated levels of PCBs in the air of schools. While the elevated PCB levels should not represent an immediate threat, they could pose health concerns if they persist over time. Leaking ballasts must be removed and properly disposed of along with any part of the fixture that has been contaminated with PCBs. In schools across the country, most PCB-containing fluorescent light ballasts have exceeded their life span and are beginning to leak and smoke. The guidance is part of the EPA's ongoing efforts to address potential PCB exposures in schools.

More than 150 incidents of leaking or smoking ballasts have been reported to the EPA from New York and New Jersey schools over the past 15 months. PCBs may cause cancer and have been shown to cause a number of serious non-cancer health effects in animals, including effects on the immune system, reproductive system, nervous system and endocrine system.

Lighting ballasts regulate the current to the lamps in fluorescent lights and provide sufficient voltage to start the lamps. Prior to 1979, PCBs were commonly used as an insulator in ballasts. In 1979, the EPA banned the processing or use of PCBs, except in totally enclosed equipment. However, a large number of fluorescent light ballasts that were installed prior to

the ban or that were stored and used after the 1979 phase-out, may contain PCBs and may still be in use in the U.S.

The most likely way that people are exposed to PCBs from the ballasts is through breathing PCB-contaminated air or, if the ballast ruptures, by touching PCB-contaminated materials. When they remain in place, leaking ballasts can continue to release PCBs over several years and create elevated levels of PCBs in the air that students, teachers and other school workers breathe. The EPA recommends removing PCB-containing ballasts from buildings as soon as possible to prevent exposure.

Removal of PCB-containing fluorescent light ballasts, as part of lighting upgrades or a stand-alone project, is an investment that may pay off with long-term benefits to students, school staff, the community and the environment. A complete lighting retrofit eliminates the PCB hazards and increases energy efficiency by 30-50 percent. Lighting retrofits to eliminate PCB-containing fluorescent light ballasts should be considered as a component of any remodeling effort. The cost of replacing these fixtures can typically be recouped in less than seven years depending upon hours of operation and local energy costs. Detailed information on the savings that may be achieved and potential funding that may be acquired through an investment in new lighting is available at the Energy Star website, which also provides information about funding that may be available for the replacement of old fixtures:

<http://energystar.gov>.

For more information and for the complete guidance on the proper maintenance, removal, and disposal of PCB-containing fluorescent light ballasts, visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/tsd/pcbs/pubs/ballasts.htm>.

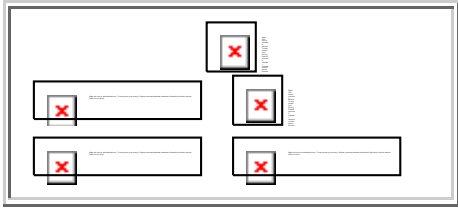
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